

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

41. (Currently amended) A method comprising:
~~playing recorded data at a remote viewing location, and~~
after recorded data is played at a remote viewing location, receiving from the remote viewing location information identifying the recorded data and at least one distribution agent for the recorded data.
42. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 41, further comprising the at least one distribution agent making copies of the recorded digital data delivered to the distribution agent.
43. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 41, wherein the receiving act comprises receiving information at the system operator location from playback devices, the information identifying the recorded data and the distribution agents.
44. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 41, wherein the receiving act comprises the act of receiving information at the system operator location at defined times.
45. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 41, wherein the receiving act comprises receiving information at the system operator location indicating each time the recorded data is played.
46. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 41, further comprising the act of charging the at least one consumer based on the information received at the system operator location.
47. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 41, further comprising the act of charging the at least one consumer a fee for each time the consumer plays the recorded data.
48. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 47, wherein the charging act comprises the act of charging a variable fee depending on when said recorded data is played.

49. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 41, wherein:
the at least one distribution agent is a retail store; and further comprising
the at least one consumer obtaining identified copies of the recorded data at retail
stores, and subsequently returning said identified copies to the retail stores.

50. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 41, further comprising
distributing said recorded data to the at least one consumer at no charge.

51. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 41, further comprising
compensating the at least one distribution agent for each time the recorded data distributed by
the agent is played.

52. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 41, further comprising
charging the at least one distribution agent for recordings delivered to the at least one
distribution agent.

53. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 41, further comprising
the act of providing an identified group of playback devices with a specified processor to
enable the identified group of playback devices to play the distributed recorded data and
thereby to inhibit playback devices, other than said identified group of playback devices,
from playing the distributed recorded data.

54. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 53, wherein:
the recorded data includes a multitude of data frames having a specified security code;
and the specified processor only outputs data frames having said specified security code.

55. (Previously presented) A method according to Claim 41, wherein the digital
data is recorded in a tangible medium and the tangible medium is a digital video disk.

56. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 41, wherein the digital
data is recorded in a tangible medium and the tangible medium is an optical disc.

57. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 41, wherein the at least
one consumer is provided a multitude of copies of recorded digital data, and further
comprising the act of providing the at least one consumer with guides identifying the copies
possessed by the at least one consumer.

58. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 57, wherein the act of providing guides comprises the act of transmitting data to said guides to update information in the guides.

59. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 57, wherein the act of providing guides comprises the act of updating the guides with commercials based on at least one consumer's viewing of the played copies of recorded data.

60. (Previously presented) A system for distributing recorded digital data, comprising:

a distribution network configured to distribute to at least one consumer at least one copy from a multitude of sets of copies of a digital data recording, wherein the copies in each set include data identifying an associated distribution agent;

at least one playback device, for distribution to the at least one consumer for playing the at least one copy of the recording, the at least one playback device comprises an identification mechanism configured to identify contents of, and the distribution agent associated with, the at least one copy of the recording; and

a transmitting mechanism configured to transmit from the at least one playback device to a system operator location information identifying the contents of, and the distribution agent associated with, the at least one copy of the recording played by the at least one playback device.

61. (Previously presented) The system according to Claim 60, further comprising a receiving mechanism, located at the system operator location configured to receive said information from the at least one playback device, and for using said information to determine compensation for the content provider and the distribution agents.

62. (Previously presented) The system according to Claim 60, wherein said information is received at the system operator location at defined times from the at least one playback device.

63. (Previously presented) The system according to Claim 60, wherein, when each playback device plays one of the copies, information identifying the content of, and the distribution agent associated with, said at least one copy is transmitted from the playback device to the system operator location.

64. (Previously presented) The system according to Claim 60, wherein the distribution network includes a plurality of retail stores.

65. (Previously presented) The system according to Claim 60, wherein each distribution agent is compensated for each time at least one copy associated with the distribution agent is played by the at least one playback device.

66. (Previously presented) The system according to Claim 60, wherein the at least one playback device includes a specified circuit that enables the playback device to play distributed copies of the recording.

67. (Previously presented) The system according to Claim 60, wherein the at least one copy of the recording is on an optical disks.

68. (Previously presented) The system according to Claim 60, wherein said recorded digital data is a movie.

69. (Previously presented) The system according to Claim 60, wherein the recorded data includes a multitude of data having a specified security code, and the at least one playback device includes a specified circuit to prevent the at least one playback device from outputting data frames not having said specified security code.

70. (Previously presented) A system for playing, and for monitoring the playing of, digital recordings having given content authorized by a content provider, each of the recordings including data identifying an associated distribution agent, the system comprising:
at least one playback device for playing the recordings, the at least one playback device including an identification mechanism configured to identify the distribution agents associated with the recordings; and
a system controller configured to receive from the at least one playback device information identifying the distribution agents associated with the recordings played by the at least one playback device.

71. (Previously presented) The system according to Claim 70, wherein the system controller comprises a compensation calculator that uses information received from the at least one playback device to determine compensation for the distribution agents.

72. (Previously presented) The system according to Claim 70, wherein:
the at least one playback device further comprises an identification mechanism configured to identify the content of the recordings played by the at least one playback device; and
the system controller comprises a receiving mechanism that is configured to receive from the at least one playback device information identifying the content of the recordings played by the at least one playback device.
73. (Previously presented) The system according to Claim 72, wherein the system controller comprises compensation calculator that uses information received from the at least one playback device to determine compensation for the distribution agents and the content provider.
74. (Previously presented) The system according to Claim 70, wherein each distribution agent is compensated for each time one of the recordings associated with the distribution agent is played by the at least one playback device.
75. (Previously presented) The system according to Claim 70, wherein the at least one playback device includes a specified circuit that enables the playback device to play the recordings.
76. (Previously presented) The system according to Claim 70, wherein the recordings are on optical disks.
77. (Previously presented) The system according to Claim 70, further comprising a multitude of program storage devices readable by the at least one playback device and tangibly embodying programs of instructions executable by the at least one playback device to display guides showing recordings available for play on the at least one playback device.
78. (Previously presented) The system according to Claim 70, wherein the system controller transmits information to the at least one playback device to update said guides.

79. (Previously presented) The system according to Claim 70, wherein each of the recordings includes a multitude of data frames having a specified security feature, and the at least one playback device includes circuits to control the at least one playback device so that the at least one playback device is able to output only data frames having the specified security feature.

80. (Previously presented) A method of managing recorded digital data distributed to at least one consumer comprising the act of, at each time the recorded data is played at a remote viewing location, receiving from the remote viewing location at a system operator location, information identifying the recorded data and at least one distribution agent for the recorded data.

81. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 80, further comprising the at least one distribution agent making copies of the recorded digital data delivered to the distribution agent.

82. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 80, wherein the receiving act comprises receiving information at the system operator location from playback devices, the information identifying the recorded data and the distribution agents.

83. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 80, wherein the receiving act comprises the act of receiving information at the system operator location at defined times.

84. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 80, wherein the receiving act comprises receiving information at the system operator location indicating each time the recorded data is played.

85. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 80, further comprising the act of charging the at least one consumer based on the information received at the system operator location.

86. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 80, further comprising the act of charging the at least one consumer a fee for each time the consumer plays the recorded data.

87. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 86, wherein the charging act comprises the act of charging a variable fee depending on when said recorded data is played.

88. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 80, wherein:
the at least one distribution agent is a retail store; and further comprising
the at least one consumer obtaining identified copies of the recorded data at retail stores, and subsequently returning said identified copies to the retail stores.

89. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 80, further comprising distributing said recorded data to the at least one consumer at no charge.

90. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 80, further comprising compensating the at least one distribution agent for each time the recorded data distributed by the agent is played.

91. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 80, further comprising charging the at least one distribution agent for recordings delivered to the at least one distribution agent.

92. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 80, further comprising the act of providing an identified group of playback devices with a specified processor to enable the identified group of playback devices to play the distributed recorded data and thereby to inhibit playback devices, other than said identified group of playback devices, from playing the distributed recorded data.

93. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 92, wherein:
the recorded data includes a multitude of data frames having a specified security code; and the specified processor only outputs data frames having said specified security code.

94. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 80, wherein the digital data is recorded in a tangible medium and the tangible medium is a digital video disk.

95. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 80, wherein the digital data is recorded in a tangible medium and the tangible medium is an optical disc.

96. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 80, wherein the at least one consumer is provided a multitude of copies of recorded digital data, and further comprising the act of providing the at least one consumer with guides identifying the copies possessed by the at least one consumer.

97. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 96, wherein the act of providing guides comprises the act of transmitting data to said guides to update information in the guides.

98. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 96, wherein the act of providing guides comprises the act of updating the guides with commercials based on at least one consumer's viewing of the played copies of recorded data.

99. (Previously presented) The method according to Claim 80, further wherein the recorded data includes a multitude of data frames having a specified security code such that a processor at a viewer location only outputs data frames having said specified security code.

100. (Previously presented) An apparatus for playing a copy of a digital data recording, wherein the copy includes data identifying a distribution agent associated with the copy, said apparatus comprising:

a playback device, the at least one playback device comprising an identification mechanism configured to identify contents of, and the distribution agent associated with, the copy of the recording; and

a transmitting mechanism that is configured to communicate with the playback device and is configured to transmit from the playback device to a system operator location information identifying the contents of, and the distribution agent associated with, the copy of the recording played by the playback device.

101. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 100, wherein said information is transmitted to the system operator location at defined times from the playback device.

102. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 100, wherein, when the playback device plays a copy, information identifying the content of, and the distribution agent associated with, said copy is transmitted from the playback device to the system operator location.

103. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 100, wherein each distribution agent is compensated for each time the copy associated with the distribution agent is played by the playback device.

104. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 100, wherein the playback device includes a specified circuit that enables the playback device to play distributed copies of the recording.

105. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 100, wherein the copy of the recording is on an optical disk.

106. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 100, wherein said recorded digital data is a movie.

107. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 100, wherein the recorded data includes a multitude of data having a specified security code, and the playback device includes a specified circuit to prevent the playback device from outputting data frames not having said specified security code.

108. (Previously presented) An apparatus comprising:
a data playing device configured to play recorded data at a remote viewing location,
and

a receiver in communication with the playing device configured to receive from the remote viewing location information identifying the recorded data and at least one distribution agent for the recorded data.

109. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 108, wherein the receiver is configured to receive the information at a system operator location.

110. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 108, wherein the receiver is configured to receive the information at the system operator location at defined times.

111. (Previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 108, wherein the receiver is configured to receive information at the system operator location indicating each time the recorded data is played.